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C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 004437

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: UNAMI REAFFIRMS OCTOBER 28 DEADLINE

REF: BAGHDAD 4381

Classified By: Political Counselor Robert S. Ford for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

1. (C) In an October 28 meeting with the Charge, SRSG Qazi and IECI international adviser Craig Jenness said they would press the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq (IECI) to maintain the October 28 deadline for coalition registration and candidate lists. Qazi and Jenness agreed that the October 28 date must be kept as a rigid deadline for coalition registration. Jenness noted that as a practical matter there could be a few days flexibility on submission of candidate lists. However, he and Qazi agreed that the IECI must not be subjected to manipulation by parties that miss the deadline; the December 15 election date cannot be put in jeopardy.

2. (C) Noting that Saleh al-Mutlak and other Sunni Arab hardliners have questioned the fairness of the vote, Qazi reaffirmed that irregularities were not of a scale to have affected the outcome. Jenness said that the report on the post-referendum audit conducted in four governorates (reftel) was being reviewed by the IECI commissioners and would be released October 29. The UN officials agreed with the Charge that the IECI must be convincingly transparent and express readiness to hear complaints from all communities.

3. (C) Qazi said that the audit report will provide important "lessons learned" for the December 15 election. He said that it was important for the Iraqi public to feel confident that these lessons were being applied. Qazi said that the audit report as well as the results of the review of the Kirkuk voter registration list should help deflate charges from Sunni Arab hardliners of sectarian bias at the IECI. Qazi said that he had responded to sectarian critics of the IECI by noting that the Commission must be doing a good job since it was the object of complaints from all communities.
Satterfield